

RESULTS FOR BUSINESS OWNER,
RESIDENT AND CUSTOMER QUESTIONNAIRES
South Grand Parking Study
August 2002

Executive Summary

Questionnaires were distributed to business owners and residents in the South Grand Project Area from July 29 to August 10, 2002 as a follow-up to the input received from the focus groups conducted in May 2002. The intent of the questionnaires was to pursue some of the issues that emerged during the focus group sessions further and test some possible parking solutions. Furthermore, another questionnaire was distributed during the same time period among customers who frequent local business establishments to gather information and confirm assumptions about their parking preferences and behaviors.

Key Findings

Some of the findings from the questionnaire are highlighted below:

Business Owners and Residents

- Both business owners and residents were supportive of the South Grand Business District becoming a regional destination.
- Business owners and residents thought that more funds should be expended to increase lighting in the business district.
- Residents were more favorable toward having a higher density, more urban-type development in the business district.
- The business community and residents were either neutral or somewhat opposed to some of the parking solutions suggested in the questionnaires.
- Business owners are reluctant to invest their funds to create parking solutions.
- Demolition of buildings, both residential and commercial, in the business district may be a possibility as long as there is a larger, more comprehensive parking plan in place or the buildings are in poor condition.
- One third of residents park their car on the street, another quarter park in a garage or car port, and another quarter park in a combination of places.

Customers

- Intuitively, the closer customers are to the South Grand Business District, the more often they visit stores and restaurants in the neighborhood.
- Those who live nearby are more likely to visit during a weekend night and those who live eleven miles or more are more likely to visit during a weekend day. Those who live within ten miles are the most frequent visitors for weekday lunch.
- Most people visit the district in groups consisting primarily of friends and sometimes family. Those who live within ten miles are most likely to visit the district alone.

- Customers found it somewhat difficult to park in the neighborhood and approximately half have left the area because they could not find parking. Furthermore, roughly half of customers can identify public parking lots in the area.
- Most customers are willing to park a half a block into a residential area. The exception is those who live eleven miles or more, they are reluctant to park more than one or two houses into the area.
- Similarly, customers are willing to park about one block or two from a shop or restaurant. The only exception is customers who live eleven miles or more are willing to only park about a half of a block from a shop.
- About one quarter of respondents move their vehicle if they visit multiple establishments during a single trip.
- Half of respondents are willing to pay a nominal fee for parking with an attendant, with those living eleven miles or more willing to pay slightly more.
- Approximately half of those completing questionnaires were willing to park in a parking garage with those living farther away being the most willing.
- The South Grand Business District was rated the highest on the ease of walking from business to business. The other items received neutral ratings (e.g. lighting at night, absence of litter, personal safety).

Introduction

In phase 1 of the South Grand Parking study, residents and business owners participated in focus groups in May 2002 to give their perspective on the parking issue in the community. The input that was received during these sessions was used to get stakeholder perspective on the parking situation in the community, to identify hot button issues as well as to lay the groundwork to possible parking solutions. The next step in the process was to create questionnaires that were designed to test the possibility of different parking and traffic control solutions.

Two sets of questionnaires, one for business owners and the other for residents, was circulated from July 29 to August 10, 2002. The business questionnaire was distributed by the South Grand Business Improvement District and a Commercial District Manager for City for the St. Louis Development Corporation. The resident questionnaire was distributed door to door by neighborhood volunteers and at National Night Out, an event that brings neighbors and public safety personnel together to get to know each other and become more knowledgeable about crime prevention. Thirty-six business questionnaires were received and seventy-nine resident questionnaires were completed.

A second component to this information gathering phase was a customer questionnaire. Visitors who frequent local establishments did not participate in focus groups, so little was known about their perspective on parking in the neighborhood. The focus of the questionnaire was on parking attitudes and behaviors. Customer questionnaires were distributed at participating businesses from July 29 to August 10, 2002. Eighty-two customers took the time to complete questionnaires.

Questionnaire Results

Business Questionnaire

Expectedly, the business community supports the continued growth of the South Grand Business District and having the area become a regional destination spot. (4.67 out of a possible 5 points). (See Appendix A) Many (4.31) thought that more funds should be expended to increase lighting in the business district. The respondents were neutral about the positions that there should be more one-way streets intersecting South Grand Boulevard to allow for angled parking on both sides of the street (3.1). Overall, many were neutral about purchasing adjacent property and building well-designed parking in conjunction with other low-impact business uses (3.17). Another area where business owners were neutral is having a higher density, more urban style mix of businesses in the district (3.05).

Business owners were somewhat opposed to the ideas of consolidating bus stops to create more parking (2.64), extending curbs further into the intersections on Grand Boulevard to decrease the crossing distance for pedestrians (2.69), and restaurants having valet parking during peak hours (2.69). Business owners were more strongly opposed to the idea of leasing parking from adjacent residential properties (1.83). Respondents were also strongly opposed to the concept that business owners should share in the cost to create more parking in the South Grand Business

District by either constructing a parking garage (1.52) or by creating more surface parking (1.57).

As mentioned previously, demolishing homes to create more surface parking had been exercised, but is a highly contentious solution. The opinions about this solution were probed in the questionnaire. Most (43%) thought that it would be acceptable to demolish homes if it were part of a larger parking comprehensive plan and not done piecemeal. Roughly one quarter (23%) thought it would be acceptable to only demolish homes in poor condition and another quarter (23%) thought it would be acceptable to demolish homes with little or no historic value in order to create more parking. A few (6%) thought that it is acceptable to demolish a few homes and a few (6%) thought that houses should never be demolished.

Similarly, respondents were asked the same set of questions regarding demolishing commercial buildings to create more parking. As with homes, most (42%) thought that demolishing commercial buildings only if it were part of a comprehensive parking plan for the district would be acceptable. More than one quarter (28%) thought it would be acceptable to demolish buildings in poor condition whereas 14% thought demolishing commercial buildings that are vacant would be satisfactory. Eight percent (8%) thought that commercial buildings should never be demolished while another 8% thought it would be acceptable to demolish a few commercial buildings as parking needs dictate.

There were a few extraneous comments that people wrote on the questionnaire. These were the following:

- The largest area of concern is the stoplight at Grand & Wyoming. The north-south traffic gets 3 minutes at the green light and the east-west gets 30 seconds at the green light.
- Demolish houses if they're in poor condition.
- Lights on Grand should be longer. More streets should be metered.
- South Grand Business District should serve Metro area to succeed; not enough customers in the neighborhood.
- 2) Consolidating bus stops - Groups of people hanging out. 5) One-way streets - Great Idea- residents would hate it. 8) higher density development - would create greater parking needs.
- 7) leasing parking from residential area- depends on cost

Resident Questionnaire

Residents were asked a similar set of questions. Residents were also supportive of the continuing growth of the business district into a regional destination area (4.35 out of a possible 5 points) (See Appendix B) Residents were supportive of having the business district have more of a higher density urban-style development (3.96). They also backed the idea of funds being spent to increase lighting in the South Grand Business District (3.87). Residents were neutral about the idea of consolidating bus stops to create more parking (3.14) and leasing parking to adjacent businesses (3.05).

Residents were somewhat opposed to the idea of bumper curbs (2.7) and having more streets intersecting Grand become one-way to create more parking on either side of the street (2.67).

They were also somewhat opposed to taking out a low-interest loan to create private parking (2.62).

There are two neighborhoods that border the South Grand Business District, Tower Grove East (TGE) which lies on the east side of Grand and Tower Grove Heights (TGH), which is located on the west side of Grand. There were few significant differences on these issues between the two neighborhoods. The only two items that yielded more than a half of a point difference were that TGE residents were more likely to favor the idea of having more street intersecting Grand become one-way to create angled parking on both sides of the street (3.29 versus 2.36 for TGH). Conversely, TGH residents were more favorable toward the concept of taking out a low interest loan to create private parking (2.93 versus 2.33 for TGE). However, the overall sentiment is still neutral on these two issues. The main difference in opinion between business owners and residents on identical questionnaire items is that residents more strongly support the idea that there should be a higher density, urban-style development within the commercial district (residents 3.96 and business owners 3.05).

In the area of probing under what circumstances would it be acceptable to demolish buildings to create parking, more than one third (36%) of residents thought that homes should never be demolished to create parking, while nearly another third (30%) thought that it would be acceptable to demolish homes in poor condition. Nearly one quarter (21%) think it is acceptable to demolish homes as long it is part of a larger comprehensive parking plan for the area. A few thought that it would be acceptable as long as the homes had little or no historic value (9%) and that it is acceptable to demolish homes as parking needs dictate (4%).

Residents' opinions were similar regarding commercial buildings. One third (35%) thought it would be acceptable to demolish commercial structures as long as it was part of a comprehensive parking plan for the neighborhood. Twenty-eight percent (28%) thought that commercial buildings should not be demolished and another twenty-eight percent (28%) thought it would be acceptable as long as the structures were in poor condition. A few had the opinion that structures that had been vacant could be candidate for demolition (5%). Three percent (3%) of the respondents thought that commercial buildings could be demolished as parking needs dictated.

There was a great deal of difference between the two neighborhoods. Most of TGH (40%) thought that homes should never be demolished, compared to 24% of TGE. The majority of respondents in TGE (38%) thought demolishing houses in poor condition would be an alternative and thirty-three percent (33%) thought that there should be a comprehensive parking plan in place that would assist in determining which buildings, if any could be demolished to create more parking.

The neighborhoods were also somewhat diverse in opinion regarding demolishing commercial buildings. Half (50%) of TGE residents favored the idea of having a comprehensive plan in place before demolishing commercial structures, compared to thirty percent (30%) in TGH. Most respondents in TGH (36%) favored the idea that demolishing commercial buildings in poor condition would be a satisfactory solution.

Another component of the resident questionnaire examined what commercial uses would be acceptable to create a buffer between the business district and the residential area. The overwhelming majority thought that having an office, shop or studio would be acceptable (92%, 84% and 88%, respectively). Sixty-four percent (64%) thought that having a drinking establishment encroach in the residential area would be unacceptable.

The questionnaire explored where residents typically park their vehicles. One third of residents (33%) usually park their vehicle on the street. Another quarter (23%) park in a garage or car port and approximately one quarter (24%) park in a combination of places. Thirteen percent (13%) park on a concrete pad behind their home and only five percent (5%) did not own a vehicle. The only major differences between the two neighborhoods are that residents in TGE are more likely to park on a concrete pad behind their house (24% versus 9% for TGH.) The other difference is that one third of the respondents from the TGH neighborhood (33%) park in a combination of places while sixteen percent (16%) of TGE are likely to have that parking practice. Nearly all residents (94%) typically get to the business district by walking.

There were a few extraneous comments that people wrote on the questionnaire. These are the following:

- Would love to see this one way street emptying out on Grand. Gas station has too many hotrodders doing 60 mph heading to Arkansas - we have too many small children playing as well as larger kids playing ball in the street even though high school and bank lot are one block away as well as park 3 blocks away.
- Increase the walk time on the traffic light which always has been long enough to let you get half way across the street. Demolish vacant buildings like the old Woolworth building and the building on the northeast corner of Grand and Juniata.
- Cars turning onto our block from Grand already think it's a one-way and always drive down the middle of the street. Bars - no more than already exist. We don't need one on every corner.
- Change Hartford east of Grand to a 2-way, erect clear signs to parking and make use of the Commerce Bank gigantic lot.
- The Business Owners need to realize that they are in a city and their customers won't get to park next to the door. They need to stop aiming their marketing at suburbanites and become more relevant to the neighborhood.
- The three houses behind the Bank would make sense to take down for parking.
- I park three cars, 2 behind my house and 1 on the street.
- We have so much black top parking space in our immediate area just behind Commerce Bank, that is wholly under utilized, further, we cannot afford to lose any of our historic commercial space.
- Houses shouldn't be allowed to reach a state of "poor condition".
- Neighborhood Valet, 2 or 3 spit on each side of road. Curb bumps. One lane each way - Grand to Arsenal. 45 degree parking that you back into - maybe.
- Houses directly behind the South Grand business district could be demolished to create ample parking for most or all of the businesses (as happened with St. Louis Bread Co.)
- At home I park on the street, but if I could get a low-interest loan to repair my garage I would park in it.
- Circle block 8-12 times to park at home.

-To demolish depends on the building, it would be acceptable to get rid of the gas station between Humphrey and Utah but not the law office.

Customer Questionnaires

There were 82 people who responded to the customer questionnaire. Forty percent of the respondents live within four blocks of the commercial district. All but three live in the St. Louis metropolitan area. Of those who do not live in the St. Louis area, two are from Springfield, IL and one is from Rolla, MO. Respondents who live outside of the neighborhood were also split into the categories of those who live ten miles or less from the South Grand Business District and those who live eleven miles or more. This demarcation line is the approximate beginning of more suburban-type development. Also, if people live more than ten miles from the district, visiting the South Grand Business District will be more of a planned trip instead of a convenient trip.

About half (56%) are frequent visitors to the business district, coming 8 or more times per month. (See Appendix C) One quarter (24%) visit the district about once a month. As can be expected, distance determines the frequency of visits to the South Grand Business district. Seventy-nine percent (79%) of residents who live in the neighborhood visit the South Grand Business District eight or more times per month. More than half (56%) of customers who live within ten miles of the district visit it 8 or more times per month. People who live eleven miles or more from the district are more inclined to visit once a month (47%).

When people visit the South Grand Business District is pretty evenly distributed, but two-thirds of the respondents (66%) visit during weekend days and evenings. Those who live in the neighborhood and within ten miles of the district are most likely to visit during a weekend night (76% and 78%, respectively). Those who live eleven miles or more are most likely to visit during the day on a weekend (53%). Those who live ten miles or under are the most frequent weekday lunch visitors (63%). About half of the respondents who live in the neighborhood and within ten miles of the business area visit on week days for dinner (56% and 59% respectively).

Most customers (71%) visit the district with friends. Customers who live within ten miles of the district are more likely to come by themselves (78%). Customers who live eleven miles or more either visit with family members (76%) or with friends (71%). Respondents who live in the neighborhood and ten miles or under also visit often with friends (76% and 63%, respectively).

Most customers found it somewhat difficult to find a parking space in the South Grand Business District (2.54 out of a possible score of 5). There was not much variation among the three groups on this item.

Where people park is pretty evenly distributed when looking at customers as a whole. Patterns form when looking at the different groups. One third of residents in the neighborhood (33%) park in metered parking on side streets. Customers who live ten miles or under typically park in parking lots (48%). Customers who live eleven miles or more either park in metered parking on Grand (59%) or metered parking on side streets (53%).

Almost half of the respondents (43%) were willing to park only about one half of a block into the residential area. The results are similar when looking at the sub groups of respondents. Only the group that lives eleven miles or more most typically willing to park only one or two houses into a neighborhood (41%). Respondents are typically not creatures of habit when it comes to finding parking. Most park wherever they find an open spot (62%). The findings are also similar when examining the subgroups.

Only about one quarter (26%) park their vehicle in more than one location during the same visit to the business district. These results did not differ among the subgroups. Nearly half (46%) have left the business district because they could not find parking. The results are similar among the subgroups, but fifty-three percent (53%) percent of those who live eleven miles or more have left the district because they could not find parking.

Over half of the respondents would be willing to pay for parking with an attendant in a parking lot or garage (57%). Most (44%) would only be willing to pay one or two dollars for the parking. Respondents who live eleven or more miles away were more willing to pay for parking with an attendant (82%) with about a third (35%) willing to pay slightly more, \$3-5. Furthermore, half (50%) of the customers who responded would be willing to park in a parking garage. That inclination is also reflected in customers who live in the neighborhood. However, the striking difference is between the customers who live ten miles or under and the group that lives eleven or more miles from the district. Only thirty percent (30%) of those questioned who live ten miles or under would park in a garage whereas nearly three-fourths (71%) of the respondents who live eleven miles or more said they would park in a parking garage off of S. Grand Boulevard.

Most customers (45%) would be willing to park one to two blocks from a restaurant and half (50%) claimed they would also park one to two blocks from a retail establishment. About one third claimed they would park no more than one block from either a restaurant or store (34% and 38% respectively). The main difference among the subgroups is that fifty-nine percent (59%) of respondents who live 11 miles or more would park less than a block from a shop. A surprising finding is that customers who live outside of the neighborhood are more confident in their ability to identify public parking (52% from outsiders versus 42% from those who live in the neighborhood.)

The two respondents who required handicap parking were able to be accommodated. Half of the respondents (48%) said they could easily identify public parking. These results were similar among subgroups.

The South Grand Business District received the highest ratings on the ease of walking from business to business (3.9 out of a possible 5 points). The rest of the rankings were neutral on the remaining items (personal safety 3.2; lighting at night 2.79; maintenance of existing public lots 2.86; absence of litter 3.07; ease of driving within the district 3.12; parking tickets issued 2.49; and occurrence of car break-ins 2.54) There were no significant differences among the subgroups.

Customers were asked for ideas to improve parking in the South Grand Business District. There were not any consistent messages, but the ideas that occurred most often were building a parking garage (7), more parking in general (5), more police patrols (6), make better use of Commerce Bank lot (5), and put metered parking in Commerce Bank lot (2).

Summary

Business Owners and Residents

Overall, the business community and residents are supportive of the direction the neighborhood has been taking and would like to continue the momentum of being a regional destination. In order to attract more visitors from outside the neighborhood, parking solutions should have those who may not be as familiar with the neighborhood in mind. One area that both business owners and residents agreed was that funds should be spent for more lighting in the South Grand Business District. However, residents were more likely to back the idea that there should be a higher density urban-type development in the neighborhood. The type of development that would occur in the business district would also dictate the types of parking solutions implemented. Examples of possible parking resolutions under this scenario would include more mixed uses and potentially structures that include parking as opposed to the more traditional suburban-style parking with large lots that are visible from the street. Residents are amenable to having low-impact business uses such as an office, a shop or studio be used as a buffer rather than a drinking establishment. More consensus would need to be reached before moving forward with proposals that would suit a higher-density development.

The business community and residents alike were either neutral or somewhat opposed to some of the parking solutions suggested in the questionnaires. Other solutions may need to be introduced or perhaps some of the current ones can be featured in a different light to gain more popularity. Business owners are also reluctant to pool their funds to help contribute to parking solutions in the neighborhood. Other sources for funding would need to be examined. The businesses in the South Grand Business District may not be as numerous or have the financial capacity needed to impact the parking in the district.

Demolishing buildings in the neighborhood is highly controversial, but may not need to be ignored altogether. Business owners and residents in the Tower Grove East neighborhood are most likely to champion the idea that there should be a comprehensive parking plan in place to determine which homes or commercial buildings, if any, should be demolished to improve parking in the neighborhood. Half of Tower Grove Heights residents thought that homes should not be demolished at all, but were more likely to back the idea that there should be a comprehensive parking plan in place before commercial buildings are demolished. Demolishing structures in poor condition may also gain some backing from business owners and residents.

Another parking remedy is to create an incentive for residents, especially those within a half of a block of the business district, to park off of the street. One third of residents who participated in the questionnaire usually park their vehicle on the street. Another quarter park in a garage or car port and approximately one quarter park in a combination of places.

Customers

Intuitively, the closer customers are to the South Grand Business District, the more often they visit the neighborhood. Those who live in the neighborhood and within ten miles of the district are most likely to visit during a weekend night and those who live eleven miles or more are most likely to visit during the day on a weekend. Those who live ten miles or under are the most frequent weekday lunch visitors. Most customers are likely to visit the business district with others, with the exception of those who live within ten miles of the community, who tend to visit by themselves. One positive aspect of people visiting the neighborhood in groups is that most likely they will take only one vehicle for a group of people, which will reduce the demand for parking.

Customers found it somewhat difficult to find parking within the neighborhood and even approximately half have left because they could not find parking. Customers who live more than eleven miles have left the business district when unable to find parking more often than any other group. Half of respondents felt confident in their ability to identify public parking, with those who live outside of the neighborhood being more confident. Improvements can be made in making public parking more identifiable.

Where customers park is pretty evenly distributed, with those who live within ten miles more likely to park in a parking lot and those who live eleven miles or more are most likely to seek metered parking on Grand Boulevard. Most customers are willing to park about one half of a block into a residential area. The only exception is that most customers who live eleven miles or more will only park one or two houses into a residential area. Approximately one quarter of customers move their vehicle during the same visit. Customers are willing to park one block or two from either a restaurant or shop. Moreover, customers who live eleven miles or more are only willing to park about one half of a block from a shop. As reflected in these self-reported parking tendencies, any newly-created parking should be located on South Grand Boulevard or immediately off of it.

Half of participating customers are willing to pay for parking with an attendant and in a parking garage. Respondents who live eleven miles or more are more willing to park in a parking garage and are willing to pay slightly more for this service. Parking with an attendant or even a parking garage will likely be well-used when the business district attracts more visitors from outside of the immediate area. Moreover, people will also be willing to pay a nominal fee for this service.

Finally, the South Grand Business District was rated the highest on the ease of walking from place to place with other items receiving neutral ratings. Although these are not the type of ratings that would necessarily keep visitors away, improvements can be made to attract more people to the district.